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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 003575

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/SE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/05/2014

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SUBJECT: TURKEY EXTENDS DECREE ALLOWING USE OF TURKISH FACILITIES TO SUPPORT HUMANITARIAN AND RECONSTRUCTION EFFORTS IN IRAQ

REF: A) ANKARA 3495 B) ANKARA 3482

Classified By: Political-Military Affairs Counselor Timothy A. Betts.
Reasons: 1.5 (B and D).

¶11. (C) On June 23, 2004, Turkey's Council of Ministers (COM) extended for one year the decree allowing the use of Turkish bases and ports for humanitarian and reconstruction operations in Iraq. The President signed the decree later that day. The decree does not require parliamentary approval.

¶12. (C) Comment: During the last year, the June 2003 decree provided Turkish authorities sufficient legal basis to approve three important Iraq-related requests from the US: stationing of aerial refueling tankers at Incirlik Air Base (IAB) in support of OEF and OIF operations, blanket overflight clearances for aircraft supporting OIF, and the use of IAB to rotate US troops out of Iraq. The extension of the decree should provide the necessary legal basis to allow the Turkish General Staff to allow the tankers to continue operating, as EUCOM recently requested (ref a). (Note: in fact, tanker operations at IAB continue today, June 24. End note.)

¶13. (C) Comment continued: The decree may also provide sufficient legal basis for Turkish authorities to consider positively EUCOM's June 16 request to establish a cargo hub at IAB to support OEF and OIF operations (ref a), as some GOT officials have suggested. TGS Deputy J5 for Agreements Major General Acar told ODC Chief June 24 that TGS and MFA had agreed during a June 23 meeting to consider EUCOM's cargo hub request. On next steps, Acar said TGS and the Turkish Air Force would hold internal meetings and then would be prepared to discuss the request with appropriate US military representatives. Acar said he is drafting a letter (for TGS DCHOD GEN Basbug's approval) to ODC Chief that will outline the process, but declined to elaborate further. End comment.

¶14. (C) Unrelated to the decree, Acar confirmed what TGS DCHOD GEN Basbug had told visiting State PM A/S Bloomfield June 17 regarding Weapons Deployment Training (WTDs): TGS and MFA are willing to consider USAFE's request to conduct WTDs in Turkey (ref b). Acar said his forthcoming letter to ODC chief on the cargo hub will also outline the process for the way ahead on WTDs.

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